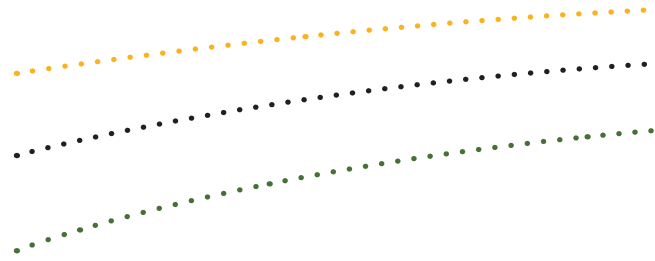




Australian Government

Department of Sustainability, Environment,
Water, Population and Communities



COMMERCIAL KANGAROO HARVESTING FACT SHEET

Government roles in kangaroo harvesting

Under national environment law—the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*—the Australian Government has responsibility for providing for the protection of the environment, promoting ecologically sustainable development and the conservation of biodiversity.

While Australia's laws concerning wildlife trade are some of the most stringent in the world, they are not intended to obstruct the sustainable activities of legitimate organisations and individuals. Instead, they have been designed to demonstrate that when managed effectively wildlife trade contributes to, and is entirely compatible with, the objectives of wildlife conservation.

The commercial kangaroo harvest industry in Australia is one of the world's best practice wild harvest operations, with management goals based firmly on principles of sustainability.

Both the Australian Government and state governments have a role in the conservation of kangaroo populations. The states have responsibilities for regulating the harvest and processing industry, while the Australian Government controls the export of kangaroo products through the approval of kangaroo management programs and the granting of export permits.

Under national environment law, the Australian Government has approved management plans for the harvest of four kangaroo species in four states: Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, and Western Australia. Before approving any management plans that allow for the commercial harvest and export of kangaroo products, the Australian Government carefully considers factors such as the biology, population size and trends and conservation status of the species. Management plans must demonstrate that the harvest does not have a detrimental impact either on the harvested species or their ecosystems.

These plans aim to ensure the conservation of kangaroos over their entire range. They describe how the activities of shooters and dealers are regulated, how the size of the population is monitored, the regulations and checks which detect illegal harvesting or over-harvesting and any other measures to ensure conservation of the species.





Commercial harvest of kangaroos

The species that are currently harvested for commercial export are:

- red kangaroo (*Macropus rufus*) in areas of Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, and Western Australia
- eastern grey kangaroo (*M. giganteus*) in areas of Queensland and New South Wales
- western grey kangaroo (*M. fuliginosus*) in areas of New South Wales, South Australia, and Western Australia
- common wallaroo or euro (*M. robustus*) in areas of Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia

All four species subject to commercial harvesting are common and none are listed as threatened species. Red, eastern grey and western grey kangaroos are the most abundant species and make up about 90 per cent of the commercial harvest.

Products derived from kangaroos include meat for human consumption and skins for leather products. Some skin and meat is used domestically, with the remainder exported to more than 55 countries.

Quota setting

Quotas are set annually and as a proportion of estimated populations, established through surveys undertaken by each state's wildlife agency. Survey methods vary between and within states depending on the geography of the survey site, and are outlined in the state management plans. Survey methods and frequency also vary between species.

The scientific community and state wildlife management agencies consider that annual harvest levels in the order of 15 per cent of the populations for grey kangaroos and wallaroos, and 20 per cent for red kangaroos, are sustainable. The sustainable harvest quotas are set at or below these rates, and represent an upper harvest limit independent of industry demand. To ensure there is no detriment to any species in any region, each state is divided into zones for monitoring and quota-setting. Quotas are set for each zone but are reported on the department's website at the state level.

Quotas represent the maximum number of kangaroos that can be harvested. The commercial harvest is generally significantly less than the approved quota, as the harvest is linked to market demand and the capacity of the industry to harvest the quota level. The percentage of the quota that is used varies between years. Since 2001, it has been averaging less than 65 per cent.

Special quota

In addition to the sustainable harvest quotas, New South Wales and South Australia also have a 'special quota'. Special quotas are only used when a management zone's commercial quota has been used and a continuing damage mitigation need has been demonstrated. Their purpose is to ensure that kangaroos that would have been shot by landowners under non-commercial licences and left in the field are now used by the industry. Special quotas are rarely used. Currently, less than 500 kangaroos are killed annually under the special quota.



Sustainability of harvest

Australia has undergone severe drought in recent years, and because the primary driver of kangaroo populations is rainfall, overall kangaroo numbers in Australia declined as a result. Kangaroos have been harvested and monitored for more than 25 years during which time kangaroo populations in Australia have demonstrated a strong capacity to recover from the regular occurrence of drought. For example, the drought of 1981–1983 drove kangaroo populations in harvested areas down to almost half of the estimated pre-drought population; they subsequently recovered to exceed pre-drought figures within seven years. In response to the drought of the early 1990s in Queensland, kangaroo populations also went through a period of decline, before recovering following good rainfall. Throughout this period, kangaroos in Queensland were harvested at rates close to 20 per cent, demonstrating that the harvest did not impede the kangaroos' natural ability to recover quickly following drought.

Harvesting may depress populations further than if they were not harvested during drought, but historical data clearly demonstrates that this does not influence the long-term viability of kangaroo populations within the harvested areas of Australia.

Humane harvesting practices

Animal welfare considerations are a priority of national environment law. The legislation requires the Australian Government to ensure proposals for the sustainable use of wildlife observe strict welfare requirements.

Kangaroos are harvested by being shot by skilled professional shooters. All commercial shooters must comply with the *National code of practice for the humane shooting of kangaroos and wallabies for commercial purposes*, which outlines an achievable minimum standard of humane conduct in regard to the shooting of kangaroos and wallabies. The code was developed after a long process of consultation involving industry, government, animal welfare groups, the scientific community and the public.

All states and territories also have legislation regulating animal welfare matters and can prosecute offenders.

Further information


For more information on Australia's wildlife protection measures:

Email: ciu@environment.gov.au

Phone: free-call 1800 803 772 (within Australia) or 0011 61 2 6274 1292

Fax: 0011 61 2 6274 1970

Internet: www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/wildlife-trade



The following links may also be of use or interest:

Dcdi `Uřcbžeuota and harvest statistics

www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/wildlife-trade/wild-harvest/index.html#kangaroostats

National codes of practice (commercial and non-commercial) for the humane shooting of kangaroos and wallabies

www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/wildlife-trade/publications/kangaroo/practice.html

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